

**DIRECTORY**  
**FOR THE ASSOCIATES**  
**TO THE CONGREGATION OF THE SERVANTS OF**  
**CHARITY**  
**( AD EXPERIMENTUM )**

**Rome, April 20, 2016**

## **The vocation of the Associate**

A particular way of partaking the guanellian charism and mission is exemplified by those lay people or members of the clergy who, without making a decision for religious consecration, feel called and ask the Servants of Charity to share with them more deeply their mission, their fraternity and life style.

Our Founder , already in his time, gave special attention to such requests and welcomed in his homes both clerics and lay persons who were used to help him in a variety of manners for the benefit of the poor ; to them he opened up the opportunity of joining community life and participating in the moral and spiritual benefits of the Congregation

## **In The Church**

The Church , with the promulgation of the post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation “Vita Consecrata” (1996) has opened a way to a closer communion and collaboration between the religious congregations and the rest of the people of God- priests and lay- (Cfr. VC,54) that deserves to be encouraged for various reasons (VC.55,56)

## **A commitment of the Servants of Charity.**

Conscious that the Charism received from the Spirit is a precious gift to the whole Church, the Servants of Charity, encouraging and welcoming with joy those who desire to share in their Charismatic ideal and partake their spirituality and mission, associate them to the Congregation in a temporary or definitive way, according to the indications of the Church.

## **Requisites for admission as “Associate member”**

The possibility of becoming “associate members” of the Servants of Charity is open to lay faithful who, by virtue of their baptism and confirmation, belong to God’s people, the Church, and are in communion with her. Other requirements: rectitude of intention, maturity of age and of a decision rooted in freedom and sound motivations; good character, psychophysical health, adequate level of maturity as required by the type of life they intend to embrace.

## **The “associate priest”**

If the associate candidate is a diocesan priest, he must first obtain a written permission from his Ordinary. He will either remain incardinated in his own Diocese or request or obtain the incardination from another Bishop.

## **The lay associate**

If lay, he should be free from impediment due to marriage, even if contracted in its civil form or simply attempted. He should not be tied up to an Institute of Consecrated life, of apostolic life or a secular Institute; he should be free from debts, which he is unable to erase; he should not be induced to seek the “associate life” by force, grave fear or malice. In the case of a widower, he should exhibit written consent of his children.

## **Special bond with the servants of Charity**

The associate member, desiring to live his baptism more radically, finds inspiration in the spirituality and the charism given by God to Father Luigi Guanella, therefore sharing in the charismatic richness of the Congregation

The bond of the associate with the Congregation of the Servants of Charity is personal, mutually binding through the promise made by the candidate and accepted by the appropriate religious superior, on the ground of the provincial Directory that specifies the respective duties and rights. The member maintains his “status” as lay or cleric and therefore, not being religious, cannot be considered ‘pleno jure’, full member of the Institute.

## **Suitable to live community life.**

A requirement for becoming associate member of the Servants of Charity is the sincere disposition to live community life, according to a concrete personal project of life elaborated in dialogue and harmony with the superior of the religious community. The associate will be expected to practice in particular those virtues needed for building a joyful fraternity with all the members of the community: sincerity, gentleness of manners, spirit of adaptability, appreciation for the brothers and their talents, sense of responsibility, availability to cooperate with dedication and self-sacrifice.

He lives where the house of the religious community is located and attends its moments of prayer, of work and study, of planning and evaluation, of recreation and rest by offering his generous contribution to the realization of the community program.

He will agree with the Community's superior the taking up of works or his absences from the house due to ministry or personal reasons. He will be given the opportunity to attend meetings, conventions and appropriate courses organized by the congregation for the permanent formation of her members.

### **Under the pastoral guidance of a superior**

The associate accepts willingly the religious superior assigned to the pastoral guidance of the community; with spirit of faith he will acknowledge his authority and through personal dialogue he will entrust himself to him as a father in order to move forward on the road of the Gospel that leads to conformity to Christ by developing in the meantime his human and professional capacities.

Together with the superior for the community he will elaborate a personal project of life to better orient his own steps toward holiness of life; with him he will agree on the use of the means of social communication, of the vehicles if personally owned; he will agree as well in planning necessary opportunities for updating skills and knowledge, for family visits and for relaxation.

### **To the service of guanellian mission**

With spirit of self-sacrifice, the associate accomplishes the tasks assigned to him and collaborates, in unity of intents and under the guidance of the superior, with the other members for the good of the community mission, putting his gifts of grace and his human and professional abilities at its service.

### **The formal Promise to become an Associate**

The act that marks the "association" of a candidate to the Religious family of the Servants of Charity is the 'Promise' that is made in the presence of the religious community, in the hands of the provincial Superior or of his delegate and is signed by the associate

The act of promise, signed also by the superior who receives it and by two witnesses, will be kept in the archive of the Congregation.

Such promise does not carry a specific juridical weight in reference to the Congregation. Nevertheless, it morally obliges both the candidate and the congregation to observe the norms of the Directory as well as other specific agreements mutually reached at the time of acceptance of the Associate member into the community.

## **Spiritual and material benefits of the Associate.**

The congregation commits herself to offer to the associate spiritual support (fraternity, prayer, sacraments, spiritual guidance, formation.. ) as well as material assistance ( food and lodging, clothes, medicines, health care..), needed for the journey toward holiness, especially in the old age season or in time of difficulty and sickness when life becomes harder. The deceased associates will be remembered and cherished in prayer like the religious members.

## **Ownership and administration of personal property**

The associate keeps holding the ownership , the administration, the use and usufruct of his patrimony; before resolving to associate permanently to the Institute, he draws a will juridically valid; he informs in writing the superior about it and with him comes to an agreement on how to guard that will.

In the spirit of the Beatitudes and in dialogue with his community superior, he manages with care and prudence his goods as well as his patrimony, observing all the related legal norms on the matter with the purpose of keeping pursuing the aspiration to Holiness while fulfilling all the requirements of community life and the responsibilities of the ministry. He will also specify how he intends to meet his obligations toward his family.

## **A sober life style**

Even though he is not bound by vow of poverty, the associate commits to pursue a sober and simple life style that shows even externally his intention of imitating the model of poverty embraced by Jesus Christ and by Him proposed as a privileged condition for a life of solidarity with the poor, leading to the Kingdom of God. He is content with what is sufficient for a simple living, rejecting the temptation of seeking comforts and not opposing resistance to God's grace if he feels called to consider as superfluous even what is necessary.

## **Gratuitousness**

At the time of his entrance in the community, the associate signs in his own handwriting a declaration in which he attests that the work he does or he will do in the community will not be considered neither as subcontracted work nor as volunteer's work; if he leaves the community he will not claim any recompense for the services rendered because everything done in favor

of the Institute are services done purely free of charge.. He likewise will attest not to claim any compensation for whatsoever physical or financial damage he may have suffered during his permanence in the community or because of the activities performed within it.

### **Availability and dependence from the legitimate Superiors**

As a rule, the Promise done by the Associate is made to the Religious Province of the Servants of Charity in which the candidate is accepted. As a consequence, the Associate manifests his availability to be placed in any community within the Province to better serve the mission according to the needs. The Associate accepts willingly and with faith to be part of the local community assigned to him by the Provincial Superior. He makes sure to reach it as soon as possible. With the same openness and trust the community welcomes him.

### **Request to live in a particular religious community**

For a just cause, the Associate may request the Provincial Superior to join a particular religious community. With faith he acknowledges the authority of the pro tempore Superior entrusting himself to him with confidence.

### **Freedom of heart**

By choosing to join the Servants of Charity and to live in community with them, the Associate takes upon himself the commitment to live in celibacy in order to be close to the Lord with an undivided heart and to be freer in serving the poor. In the community he learns to love God and to love the brothers with whom he lives, to love everyone in need of God's mercy and fraternal solidarity, to educate his sentiments and conform them to those of Jesus Christ. In such a way he will find the necessary support needed to acquire freedom from inordinate affections and to remain faithful to his commitment.

### **Possibility of professing private vows**

An Associate, who feels called by God's grace and feels to join - freely - the Community, can profess the private vows of chastity, poverty and obedience. He can even request to be admitted to the consecrated life in the Institute of the Servants of Charity, as long as he is animated by the right intention, have the necessary requirements needed to live with spiritual profit the new way of life that he wants to embrace, and be willing to go through the formative stages according to the *Ratio Formationis* of the Institute.

## **Itinerary for the Association**

The first step of an Associate consists in becoming a Guanellian Cooperator.

To be an Associate, a person has to go through the following steps:

- a) A period of time dedicated to a deep knowledge of the Guanellian charism and mission of the Congregation.
- b) A period of formation and community experience in preparation for the Promise.
- c) Temporary association.
- d) Definitive association.

### **The period of training**

After an appropriate period of mutual knowledge, the aspirant asking to be associated to the Servants of Charity is admitted to the stage of formation.

The Provincial Superior entrusts the aspirant to a Servant of Charity whose task is to disclose to him the life and writings of the Founder, the spirit and charism of the Institute, and the Provincial Directory for Associates. He will also help the candidate to discern the call to this particular vocation. The duration of this stage of formation can vary from a minimum of six months to a maximum of three years.

At the end of this period, the candidate shall submit a written request to the Provincial Superior, specifying the reasons for his admittance. It is up to the Provincial Superior, with the consent of his Council, to approve the application and to assign the candidate to a religious community for the formation stage.

### **Temporary admission of the candidate**

During the formation period the candidate can leave the Institute and, on the other hand, the Institute can dismiss him.

It is up to the Provincial Superior, after having received the opinions of his Council, of the local community and of the confrere in charge of the candidate, to admit him to the temporary Association.

The rite of becoming an Associate should be simple and meaningful. It takes place as part of a Liturgy of the Word, before the Prayer of the Faithful.

## **Formula of the promise.**

The formula of the Associate's promise is as follows:

*"I,....., after having deepened and experienced the spirit and mission of the Servants of Charity, willing to follow the Lord Jesus and to serve him in our brothers and sisters who are most in need, following the example of Saint Louis Guanella, today, in the hands of N.N....., Superior (or Delegate) of the Province....., I promise to God for one year (or for the rest of my life) to join the Institute of the Servants of Charity according to the Directory for the Associates and to participate in the spirit and mission of their Founder with my fraternal and generous cooperation.*

*May the Virgin Mary, Mother of Divine Providence and Saint Louis Guanella, grant me from the heavenly Father the grace to be faithful to this commitment.*

The Superior replies:

*In the name of the Congregation of the Servants of Charity, I accept your promise to join us for a year (or for the rest of your life). May the Lord grant you to bring your offering to fulfillment.*

## **Associating perpetually**

The promise of temporary Association is made annually and be renewed for the first three years. After the third year, it can be made every three years. It is up to the Provincial Superior, with the consent of his Council, to authorize the renewal after the concerned person has presented a written request and the community, in which the person is inserted, has presented a favourable opinion.

The perpetual Promise requires a reasonable period of temporary Association, no less than three years and no more than nine years.

It may be admitted to the perpetual Promise one who has demonstrated sufficient human and emotional balance, adequate adaptation to community life, and proportionate ability to work in a unity of purpose in the Guanella mission.



It is up to the Provincial Superior, with the consent of his Council and the approval of the Superior General, to admit the applicant to be perpetually an Associate.

### **Willful separation by the associate**

Because God's gifts are final, they request to be lived with fidelity. However, it could happen that new reasons or particular difficulties has arisen so that the Associate - in conscience - feels to leave the Institute. He should mature his decision before God, allowing himself to be advised by experienced and wise people.

The Associate who, at the end of his temporary Promise, wants to leave the Institute, he may do so freely. When he wants to rescind his temporary promise or, for good reasons, his perpetual Promise, he has to submit a written request to the Provincial Superior, who, with the consent of his Council, can grant the indult to dissolve the Promise.

### **Dismissal of the associate**

Even the Congregation could be in the need to dismiss an associate in temporary or perpetual Promise, when situations similar to that established by the code of Canon law for the dismissal of religious (cc. 694, 695 and 696) may arise.

When it is proven the incorrigibility of the Associate, it is up to the Provincial Superior, with the consent of his Council, to issue the Decree of dismissal after having used all means of dialogue and fraternal correction. The Associate has the right to appeal to the Superior General.

With the dismissal or resignation of the Associate, the reciprocal obligations, both by the Associate and the Institute, are brought to an end.

### **Equity and charity**

When an Associate is dismissed, Superiors will deal with him according to Christian charity. They should accompany him with prayer, advice and, according to justice, with material aid. (See c. 106).

## **SPIRITUALITY AND LIFESTYLE OF THE ASSOCIATE**

### **Gospel, supreme rule of life**

The Gospel is the supreme rule of life of every disciple of Jesus Christ. To the Gospel the Associate goes to drink every day and quench his thirst and desire for holiness.

This Statute shows to the Associate how to live the Gospel concretely. He has to put mind and heart to know him better and better so that he may be able to put the Gospel faithfully into practice.

### **Filial Spirituality**

Sharing the Guanellian spirit is an essential condition to be associated to the Servants of Charity. Therefore the Associate should take care to possess that spirit not only by using his intelligence but also through his heart and witness of life.

The center of the Guanellian spirit has to be the filial love towards God, loved as a Father, and the fraternal charity toward the neighbor, mainly those who are devoid of human support and suffer situations of hardship and poverty.

From the heart of Christ pierced on the cross, supreme revelation of God's love for us and fiery furnace of love toward neighbor, the Associate draws the strength to give himself without limit and to be indefatigable in promoting the Kingdom of charity.

### **An endless journey of conversion to Christ**

Docile to the action of the Holy Spirit that dwells in the believer's heart, the Associate makes its own journey toward a filial abandonment to the Father's will and toward his being conformed to Christ by relying on the preventive method and the discipline that it requires, that is, trust in God's prevenient grace, merciful charity to all, and great optimism about the possibilities of the human person.

### **Spiritual means of sanctification**

To grow toward full intimacy with Christ, that is the ultimate aim of his vocation, the Associate relies on the spiritual means practiced by the Christian tradition and the Guanellian family: prayerful meditation of the Word of God; the liturgical and sacramental life centered on the Eucharist and the Sacrament of Reconciliation; personal prayer together with the

important moment of mental prayer; community prayer and the Church prayer of the Liturgy of the Hours and its obligations for the professed and ordained members; devotion to Mary with the daily recitation of the Rosary and the Angelus; and the appropriate time for silence, monthly spiritual retreats and the annual spiritual exercises.

### **Apostolic spirituality**

By choosing to join the Servants of Charity, the Associate strives to live the apostolic spirituality that the Institute has inherited from the Founder: "We cannot stop as long as there are poor to rescue and needs to provide for". The Associate shares with the Servants of Charity the pastoral passion for the Kingdom of God to which he dedicates himself with patient and generous zeal, concerned more about doing than talking, working tirelessly in carrying out his duty in joy and faithfulness. Aware that "It is God who does," he gives himself generously in the ministry, drawing his love from the furnace of divine charity, thanks to a constant contact with Christ in prayer.

### **Family spirit**

Fraternal life in community is a precious mediation that the Associate chooses to achieve full maturity in his human, christian, and charismatic dimension. He contributes to the building of the community as a "little communion of Saints" by placing before his well-being the sincere search for the common good, and cultivating brotherly dialogue, respect for each person and his/her diversity, fraternal support to those in need and patience with everyone. Generously, he puts at the service of fraternity and apostolic mission the gifts and charisms received from the Lord. At the same time he opens his heart to the 'others' seeing as gifts, enhancing and promoting their qualities in order to carry out the common commitment of fulfilling the Father's will in the likeness of the Holy Family of Nazareth.

### **Sober lifestyle**

While not bound by the vow of poverty, the Associate agrees to live a sober and simple lifestyle that even outwardly has to manifest the intention of joining the poor lifestyle embraced by Jesus Christ. The Lord presented such lifestyle as a privileged condition to live in communion with the poor and to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. The Associate should be content of what is enough to live, not allowing himself to be carried away by looking for material comforts. He should not put any obstacle to the grace of God when he feels called to find non-essential even what is necessary.

## **Celibate and well-balanced affectivity**

By his decision of joining the Servants of Charity and sharing their community life, the associate makes a commitment to live celibate in order to cling to the Lord with undivided heart and be more available to the service of the poor. In the community he learns to love God, the brothers with whom he lives and mankind in need of divine mercy and of brotherly solidarity; likewise he educates his sentiments to conform them to those of Jesus Christ, finding in this way the necessary support to grow in affective freedom and to remain faithful to his commitment.

## **Toward the accomplishment of God's plans**

The project of life of the associate member of the Servants of Charity is rooted in the obedience to God, lived neither out of servile fear nor as mere human submission, but as filial relationship of a son who in order to please his Father's heart seeks to know his will and desires and finds happiness in fulfilling them.

To discern what is in line with God's plan, he entrusts himself to the guidance of his Word. He follows the voice of the Church and the magisterium as well as his heart desires, the signs of the time and the indications of the superior of the community in which he is inserted.

## **In the Mission**

### **Work of heart**

The associate places himself at the service of the guanellian mission, convinced that it is essentially "a work of heart"; therefore, he aims at establishing and nurturing interpersonal relationships marked by benevolence and familiarity. Through the way of the heart he makes himself available to help and support people who need to discover necessary resources to live a serene life and, when possible, to overcome hardships and difficulties. He shows predilection and offers special attention toward the person who, because of his condition of abandonment and solitude, resembles the paralytic of the gospel who cries out: "I have no one!"

### **The role of animation**

The guanellian mission is articulated in programs and services in favor of elderly unattended or abandoned, of differently abled persons, better known to us as “good children”, of minors and youth in situation of disadvantage; mission is also expressed through pastoral ministry in parishes. The associate offers his collaboration according to the role and function assigned to him, in synergy with the members of the community and fully respecting the local educational project. He is not limiting himself to performing a task or a service but joins the religious member of the House in sharing their primary animating function, by stimulating both the coworkers and the guests toward the growth in authentic human and christian values.

### **Bread and the Lord**

With the motto “bread and the Lord” left by their founder as legacy, the guanellian religious summarize in a very concise way their apostolic project that aims at promoting simultaneously in the persons both the natural and supernatural dimension. The associate likewise is engaged in mission convinced that man needs bread for both his body and his spirit. Therefore, while he puts efforts in enhancing his human and social development, he knows also how to satisfy the hunger for God that he feels within.

### **RITE OF A TEMPORAY ASSOCIATION**

**(After the proclamation of the Word of God)**

**The Superior of the community:** *May the candidate to the temporary association to the religious family of the Servants of Charity please come forward.*

**The Associate:** *Here I am.*

**Celebrant:** What do you ask the Institute of Servants of Charity?

**The Associate:** After a time of sharing the spirit and the mission of your Institute in this religious community of..., I now ask to be admitted as an Associate to collaborate in fulfilling your project of life and mission.

Homily

**Celebrant:** Let us pray. (*brief silence*) Lord look upon this son of yours who today intends associate himself to our Institute. May his life glorify your name and contribute to spread evangelical charity.

**All:** Amen.